

On Sunday, July 28, 2019, the Garlic Festival, the City of Gilroy, the families of victims and all of us experienced an unbelievable horror. We will probably never understand the anger that led a young man to think that hurting people would justify the hurt he felt. Aside from a few who misguidedly directed anger at this young man, the community has come together in a way that is truly remarkable. Actually it is downright extraordinary. It shows a level of community, caring, compassion and involvement that is “inspiring” according to Donna Pray, Executive Director of the Gilroy Foundation.

Every day we hear stories of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and businesses who stepped up and helped. Volumes could be written about them. We’d like to highlight a few of the many examples. We refrained from including names because this is about the community not the individuals. Our goal is not to heap praise but to celebrate a community that is #GILROYSTRONG.

When the tragic incident began, many people ran away from what they thought was the source of the shooting—as they rightfully should—while others ran towards the scene to help. Some were local police officers who helped bring the tragic violence to a quick ending. Others were regular citizens who cared for the injured, transported folks to the hospital, and helped others evacuate. Nurses immediately notified local hospital facilities to be on alert while other medical personnel and first responders did their job while ignoring the danger. Contracted bus drivers and school bus drivers safely evacuated hundreds of festival attendees. Local officials, bystanders and first responders moved people to safe areas, like the amphitheater, and established a perimeter for fear of a second shooter.

Others courageously comforted panicked adults, children, vendors and families. And still others transported or took in strangers in the surrounding neighborhoods while waiting for an all clear. These collective and individual acts made a difference.

By 7:45 PM that night, two hours after the shooting, the Silicon Valley Community Foundation was in touch with the Gilroy Foundation to set up a victims’ fund. By 1:37 pm the next day the Gilroy Foundation received its first PayPal donation of \$25. Since that time, the Gilroy Garlic Festival Victims Relief Fund has received over \$1.5 million and continues to grow. Donations have come in all shapes and sizes. The largest was an anonymous \$250,000 donation; the smallest was \$5 with a note that it was all they could afford!

Corporations, associations, loosely-knit groups, families, locals, Gilroy expats and strangers all have contributed to the cause.

Less than 24 hours after the event, ordinary citizens organized a vigil where kids set up a lemonade stand and raised over \$3,600. A national chain restaurant pledged a percentage of sales to generate over \$11,000. A real estate office gathered donations from friends, relatives and clients to generate over \$57,000. T-shirt shops donated stock and labor to generate a variety of #GilroyStrong t-shirts, hats and bumper stickers. A group of

young teens used their own money to purchase beads and supplies to produce GilroyStrong bracelets. Another real estate office set up letters to the families of Stephen, Kyla and Trevor—three young people who tragically died from gunshot wounds. People made badges, hats and wrist bands. Folks organized vigils and memorials. Restaurants and wineries hosted benefits. A local artist distributed 500 #GilroyStrong painted rocks around Gilroy. Bay Area professional sports teams hosted events and collected donations. The band that was performing near the scene of the shooting set-up a donation station at their next concert. A traveling out-of-state band waived their fees to host an evening benefit at a local music venue. The daughter of a bookkeeper offered to do a spreadsheet categorizing the donations to the Gilroy Foundation. One restaurant owner returned to his kitchen Sunday night and made 50 pizzas for the first responders. One local spent a



few hundred dollars on energy bars and snacks for the first responders. The local rodeo paid tribute to #GilroyStrong. A local Zumba class delivered a box with \$344 in cash. Martial arts dojos collected funds. A local restaurant hosted a regional hockey team's fundraiser.

Garlic Festival Association personnel and volunteers worked with law enforcement to identify vendors, volunteers and guests who needed to retrieve valuables and vehicles. Area police departments offered extended support and assistance. Local social service agencies stepped up to provide counseling and support. The school district provided first responder gathering locations and counseling for returning students. The local community college offered space for recovery and reunification.

The Gilroy Foundation worked with the Ventura Community Foundation, which had previously experienced a similar tragedy, to set up applications and procedures for distributing the Gilroy Garlic Festival Victims Fund. The distribution of funds is being overseen by a committee of Gilroy Foundation and Silicon Valley Community Foundation volunteers. Distribution of funds began on August 15th and will continue to December 31st, 2019.

These vignettes represent only a fraction of the good, courageous, remarkable, kind, compassionate and generous things people have done in response to this tragedy. The preponderance of love demonstrated and delivered to Gilroy far outweighs the hate that sparked the tragedy. The good demonstrated and delivered cannot overcome the life taking, or the physical and emotional pain many have suffered, but it can serve as a beacon of hope. We have no doubt that there are thousands more untold stories of courage, dedication, caring and assistance.

The fact is that Gilroy came together in a way that surpasses the expected resources of this community. What all of this means is that we do have a strong Gilroy and it is bigger and much more capable than this tragic event. We are a capable and caring community...we are

#GILROYPROUD&STRONG.

A Gilroy outsider, Lady Gaga, expressed it eloquently in a Facebook post:

"In this moment, I want to channel my confusion, frustration and fury into hope. Hope that we are there for each other and for ourselves."

By now, many know that Lady Gaga and her Born

This Way Foundation has backed up this vision of

hope with a generous \$11,717 donation to Gilroy

Unified School District schools.



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